

Message Text

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ACTION SNM-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-13
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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4716

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 14727

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, MX
SUBJECT: NARCOTICS - DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE REMOTE
SENSING SYSTEMS

REF: DUGSTAD-LEE TELCON AUGUST 30

1. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS FROM REFTELCON THAT DEPARTMENT
WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY COMMENTS FOR MEETING SEPT. 2
ON PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP FUTURE REMOTE SENSING SYSTEMS.
FOLLOWING ARE TENTATIVE COMMENTS AS EMBASSY FIRST OB-
TAINED DRAFT PROPOSAL WHEN SPECIAL ASSISTANT RETURNED
FROM WASHINGTON AUGUST 31.

2. WE BELIEVE THAT PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO DEVELOP-
MENT OF A STRATEGIC DETECTION SYSTEM BASED ON EITHER
A SATELLITE OR HIGH ALTITUDE AIRCRAFT. WHILE WE ARE NOT
TECHNICALLY QUALIFIED IN THIS AREA, WE UNDERSTAND THAT
EXISTING CLASSIFIED SATELLITES HAVE RESOLUTION CAPA-
BILITIES CONSIDERABLY IN EXCESS OF WHAT IS NEEDED FOR
THIS PROGRAM. IT MAY WELL BE POSSIBLE, THROUGH COMPUTER
MANIPULATION OF EXISTING CLASSIFIED SATELLITE OUTPUT,
TO MEET OUR NEEDS AND SIMULTANEOUSLY "FUZZ" FINAL OUT-
PUT TO THE POINT THAT THE PRODUCT CAN BE RELEASED TO
THE GOM WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE TRUE CAPABILITIES OF
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THE SATELLITE.

3. WE ARE STILL SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE NEED FOR A TACTICAL
ADVANCED POPPY AND MARIJUANA DETECTION SYSTEM IN MEXICO.
IF WE HAD A STRATEGIC SYSTEM OF THE TYPE CONTEMPLATED
IN THE PROPOSAL, THE GOM WOULD BE ABLE BETTER TO
ALLOCATE ITS VISUAL RECONNAISSANCE (VISREC) RESOURCES

TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY TACTICAL SUPPORT TO THE SPRAY OPERATION. THE ONLY REAL ADVANTAGE WE CAN PERCEIVE TO THE PROPOSED TACTICAL SYSTEM IS ITS ABILITY TO PROVIDE MORE PRECISE FIELD COUNTS AND LOCATIONS THAN CAN VISREC, BUT WE QUESTION WHETHER LARGE AMOUNTS OF THIS TYPE OF DATA ARE EITHER ESSENTIAL OR USEFUL.

4. THE COST DATA IN THE PROPOSAL SUGGESTS THAT THE USG WOULD BE BETTER OFF RELYING ON VISREC FOR TACTICAL NEEDS. VISREC IS LESS EXPENSIVE THAN THE PROPOSED TACTICAL SYSTEM THROUGH THE SEVENTH YEAR OF OPERATION. EVEN AFTER THE SEVENTH YEAR, THE COST TO THE USG SHOULD BE CHEAPER SINCE THE GOM PAYS A LARGE PORTION OF THE COST FOR VISREC DURING ALL YEARS WHEREAS FOR THE PROPOSED TACTICAL SYSTEM, THE USG WOULD HAVE TO INCUR AT LEAST ALL DEVELOPMENT COSTS AND POSSIBLY A LARGER PORTION OF THE OPERATING COSTS.

5. THE ABOVE COMMENTS ARE BASED ON OUR BELIEF THAT WHAT WE AND THE GOM URGENTLY NEED IS A RELIABLE WAY, WHETHER BY SATELLITE OR HIGH ALTITUDE AIRCRAFT, TO IDENTIFY APPROXIMATE LOCATIONS OF POPPY AND MARIJUANA FIELDS OVER AN AREA OF APPROXIMATELY 1.5 MILLION SQUARE KILOMETERS TO OPTIMIZE DEPLOYMENT OF VISREC FACILITIES. THIS STRATEGIC TOOL MUST BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO WORK AROUND WEATHER PROBLEMS SUCH AS CLOUD COVER AND PROVIDE BI-WEEKLY STATUS REPORTS OF ILLICIT CROP DEVELOPMENT OVER ALL OF MEXICO, NOT JUST KNOWN POPPY AREAS. EXPERIENCE
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INDICATES THAT IF THE GOM HAS THIS INFORMATION, IT IS PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF MOUNTING A SUCCESSFUL OPERATION AGAINST IDENTIFIED ILLICIT CROPS. LUCEY

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